

Sandra Gonzalez
LIM 502
Collection Development & Management
February 2, 2020

Quick Write #1

I chose to review the collection development policy (CDP) for the Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL). Their mission statement is “to provide a dynamic collection that meets the informational, cultural and entertainment needs of the large population of Los Angeles County” (Los Angeles Public Library, n.d.). I think it is important to consider an organization’s mission statement in order to compare it with its CDP. The LAPL’s CDP fully aligns with their mission in maintaining a diversified collection reflective of the diverse population that makes up Los Angeles County. Its CDP states that “the library selects materials which best serve the needs of its varied and complex public” (Los Angeles Public Library, n.d.). While it is clear that their CDP is truly cognizant of the immensely diverse populations they serve, it is still likely that some self-censorship will still occur. Collection development policies are not fool proof. They exist as a type of guardrail to avoid issues such as censorship whether unintentional or more particular such as self-censorship. They also exist as a steppingstone to collection development, one that can be referred to by librarians as well as patrons to justify the picks for their collection. This might also assist in avoiding or winning challenges presented by patrons. CDP’s do not however prevent self-censorship. The LAPL’s CDP is one that I personally like because it is so reflective of the community they serve. I would like to believe that having a well thought out CDP and considering all of the assortment of people, cultures, and languages that Los Angeles has to offer, would make it possible to prevent self-censorship. The truth is that libraries are run by librarians who happen to be humans and not machines. They still act upon their own biases whether unintentional or not. Even if librarians *were* robots or machines that oversaw the

collection development, chances are that a human was behind the building and programming of the system, which in turn would also exhibit the same biases. Johnson explains that being more conscious is the best way to combat unintentional self-censorship (Johnson, 2018). I would even suggest that librarians participate in mandatory self-censorship seminars, but the issue is more complex. In terms of intentional censorship, it is clear that librarians are fully aware of their actions, therefore it is not a matter of lack of knowledge or training, it is a matter of self-preservation. Johnson states that “personal values and standards, fears about potential challenges, or user complaints can lead a librarian to decide not to purchase a title, to limit access to an item, or to remove an item from the collection” (Johnson, 2018) There is no malice in either of these examples. It is evident that librarians have to deal with complicated matters, oftentimes threatening their jobs which can compromise the best interests of the library.

Initiatives such as Digital Public Library of America (DPLA), Google Books, Internet Archive, Hathi Trust, and others impact CDPs by allowing libraries to make their collections more expansive or to create a unique collection in a specialized topic. Google Books and Hathi Trust for example, carry thousands of titles of works which are available to the public domain. The fact that these initiatives provide access to such a large number of materials for free, alleviates the pressure for libraries to carry the same materials (Johnson, 2018). By allowing these initiatives to carry that weight, libraries are given some room to grow their collections. This provides libraries with opportunities to be more creative with their collections and provide more of a variety of materials for their patrons. In addition, it saves the library from the financial burden of acquiring texts that can be found online. Instead, libraries can direct their funds to better diversify their selections. Initiatives such as Internet Archive and DPLA can fill in the gaps if libraries are unable to provide certain materials due to lack of funding.